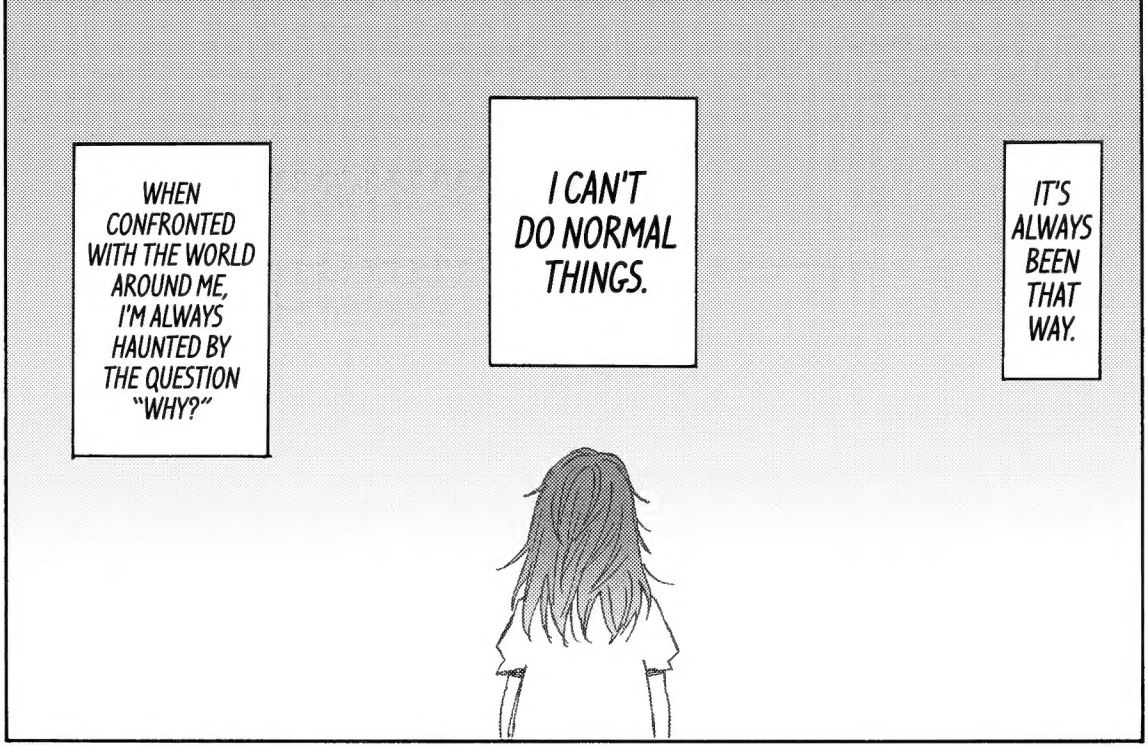
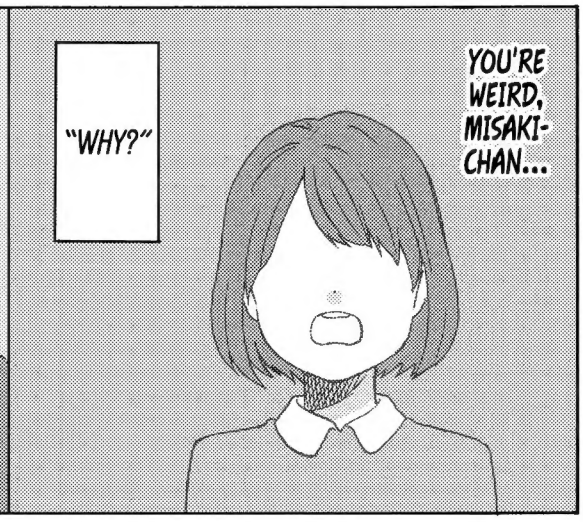
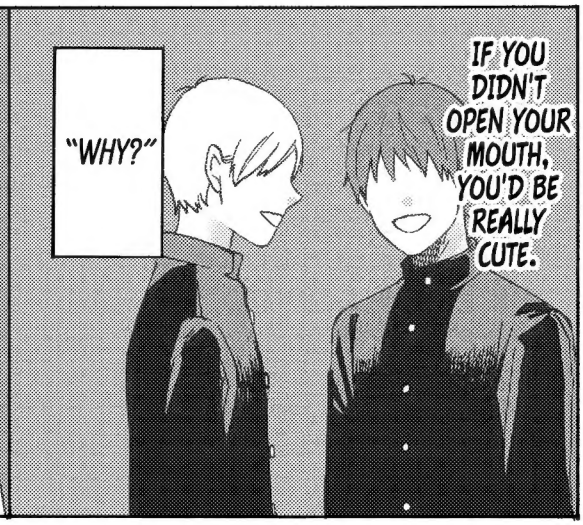

WHEN CONFRONTED WITH THE WORLD AROUND ME, I'M ALWAYS HAUNTED BY THE QUESTION "WHY?"
I CAN'T DO NORMAL THINGS.
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY.

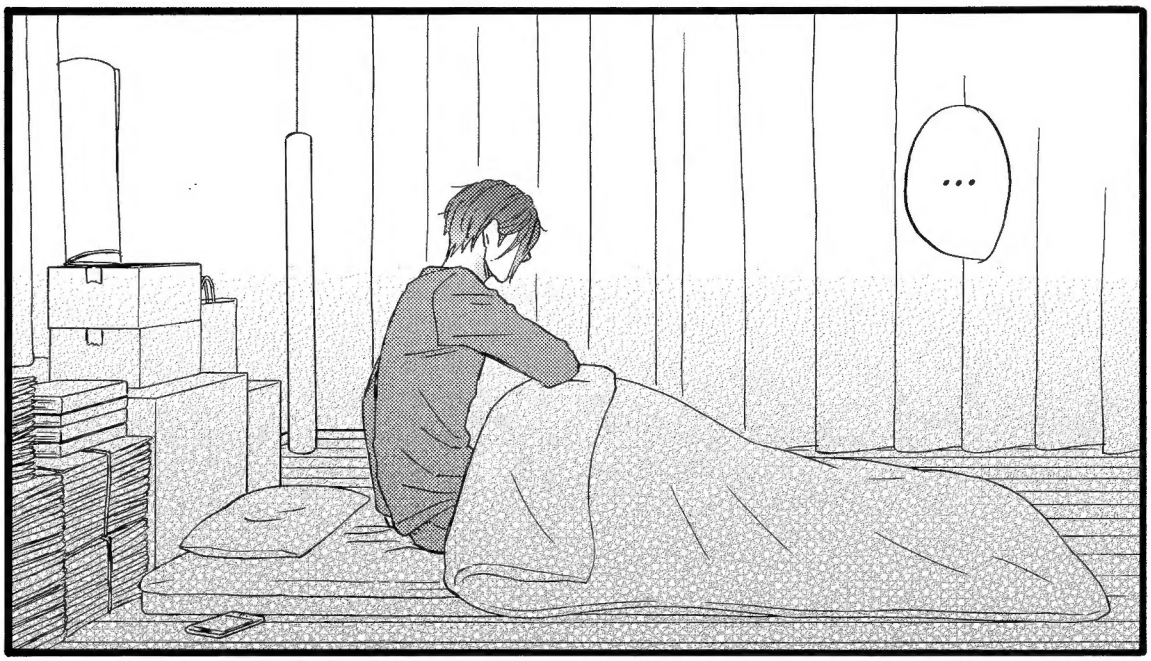
"WHY?"
PLEASE... DON'T DO THAT KIND OF THING AGAIN.


"WHY?"
YOU'RE WEIRD, MISAKI-CHAN...

"WHY?"
WANNA GO OUT WITH ME?


"WHY?"
IF YOU DIDN'T OPEN YOUR MOUTH, YOU'D BE REALLY CUTE.

"WHY?"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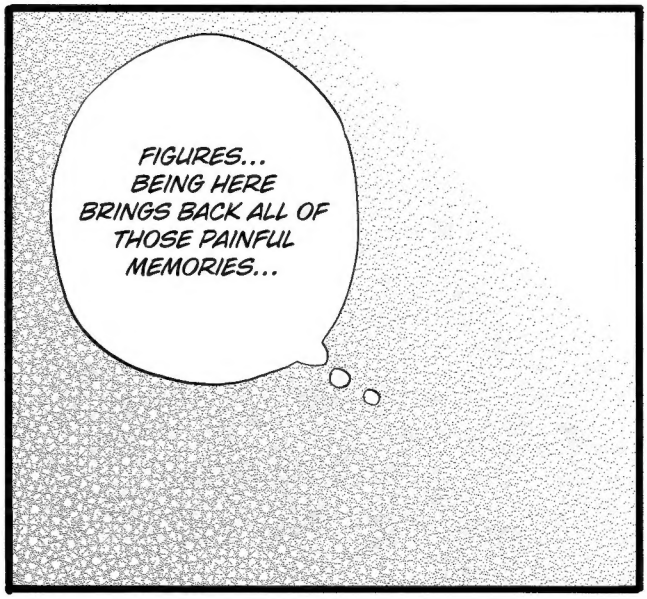
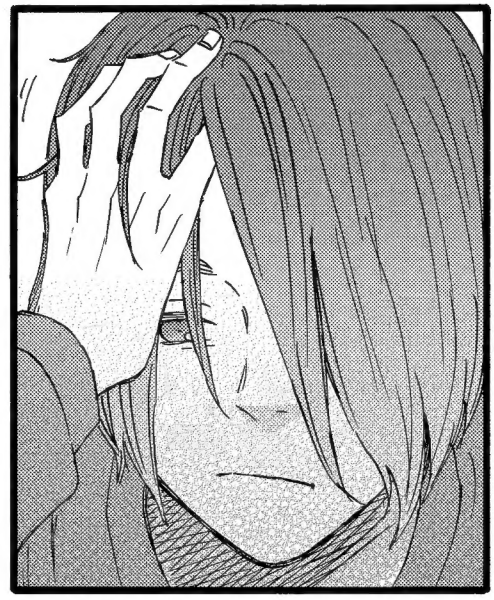
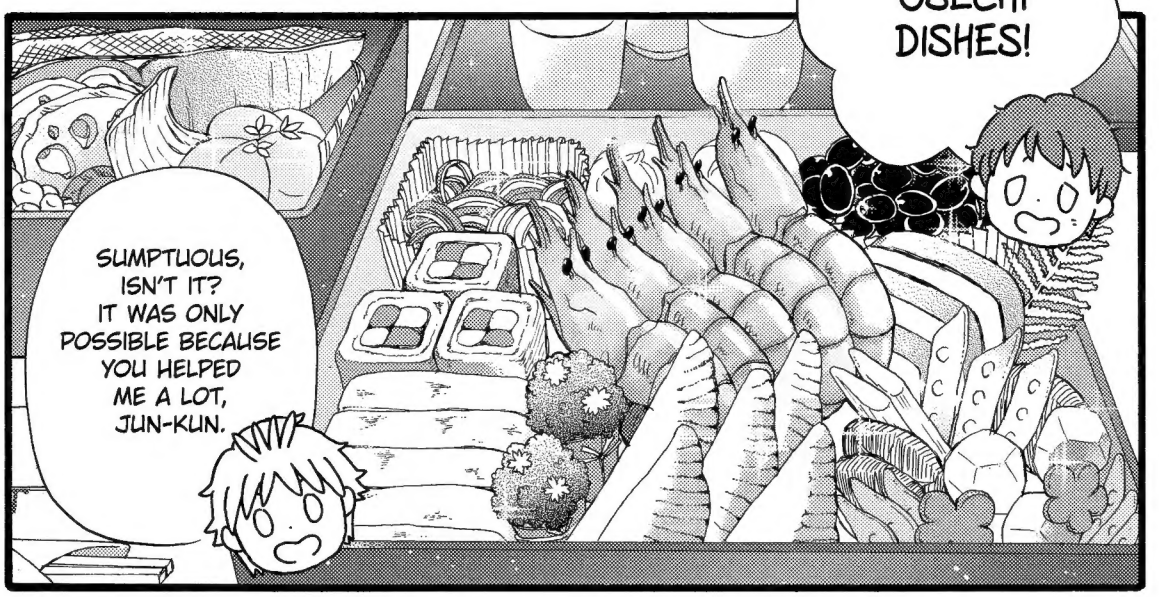
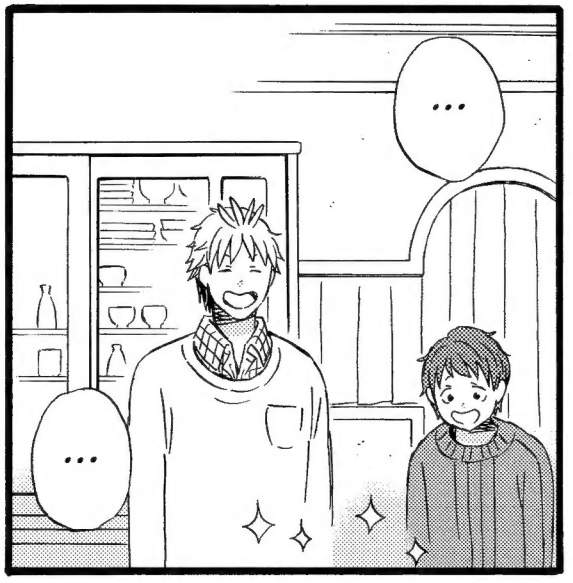

FIGURES... BEING HERE BRINGS BACK ALL OF THOSE PAINFUL MEMORIES...




WHOA... OSECHI DISHES!
SUMPTUOUS, ISN'T IT? IT WAS ONLY POSSIBLE BECAUSE YOU HELPED ME A LOT, JUN-KUN.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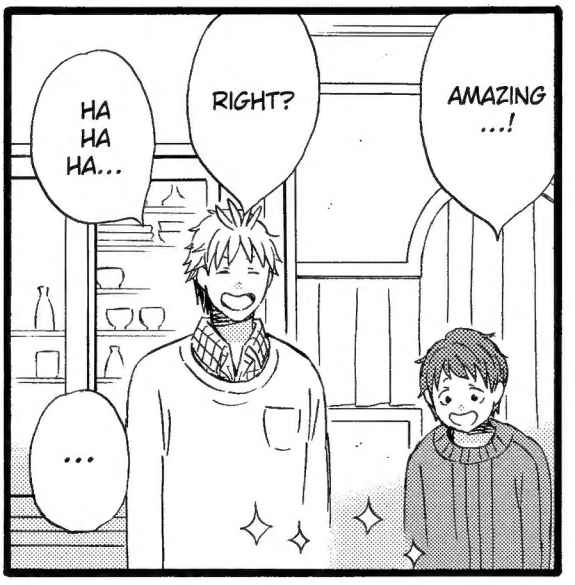
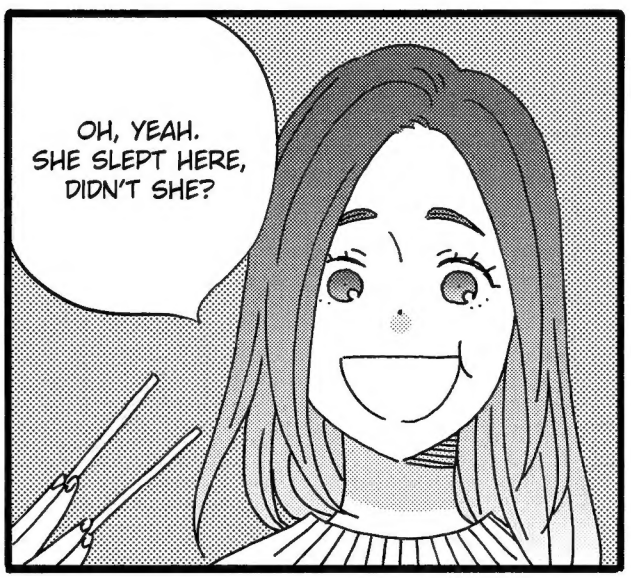
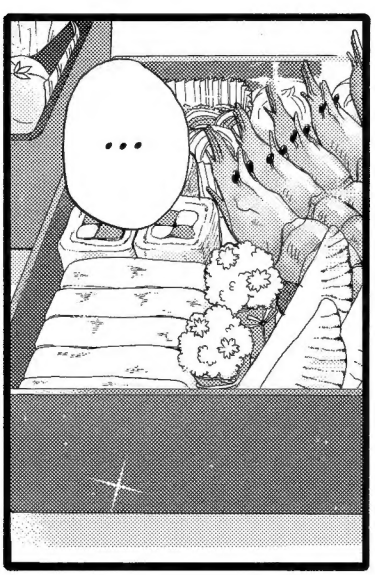

HA HA HA...
RIGHT?
AMAZING ...!
...

GEEZ... SOMETHING WEIRD HAD TO HAPPEN RIGHT AT THE START OF THE NEW YEAR...
...SO SHE STAYED THE NIGHT...

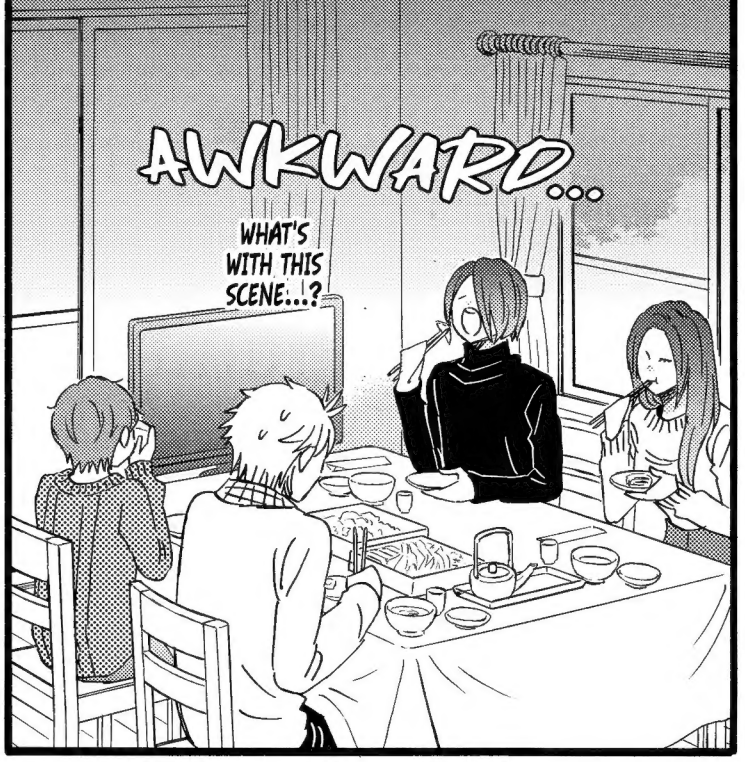
I'M HONESTLY NOT SURE WHAT TO DO.
W-WELL... SHE'S HERE, ACTUALLY. WE LET HER SLEEP IN THE STOREROOM.
UM... WHAT ABOUT THE PERSON FROM YESTERDAY?

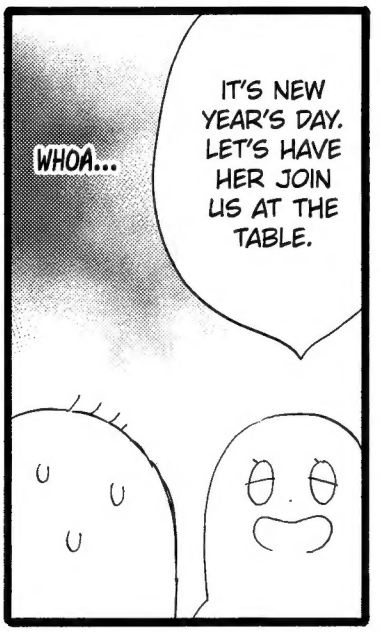

OH, YEAH. SHE SLEPT HERE, DIDN'T SHE?

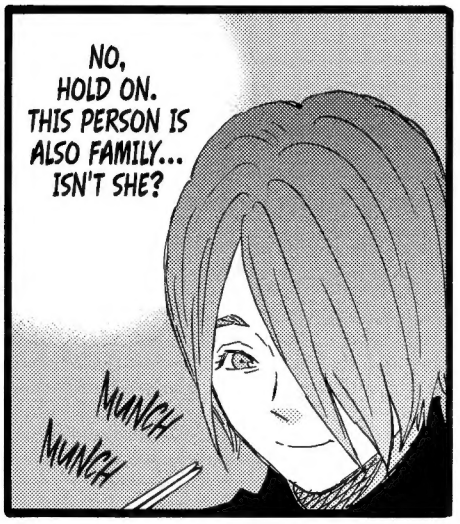
RIGHT... WE CAN ASK HER WHAT TO DO NEXT.
WELL... I'LL GO WAKE UP MOTHER, OKAY?

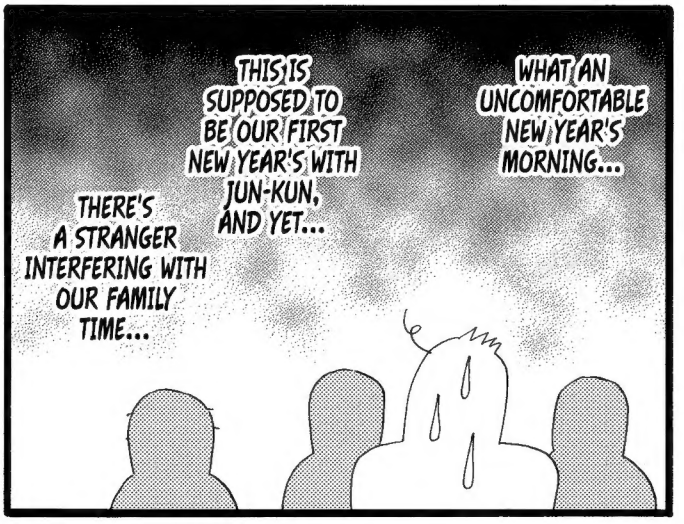

...

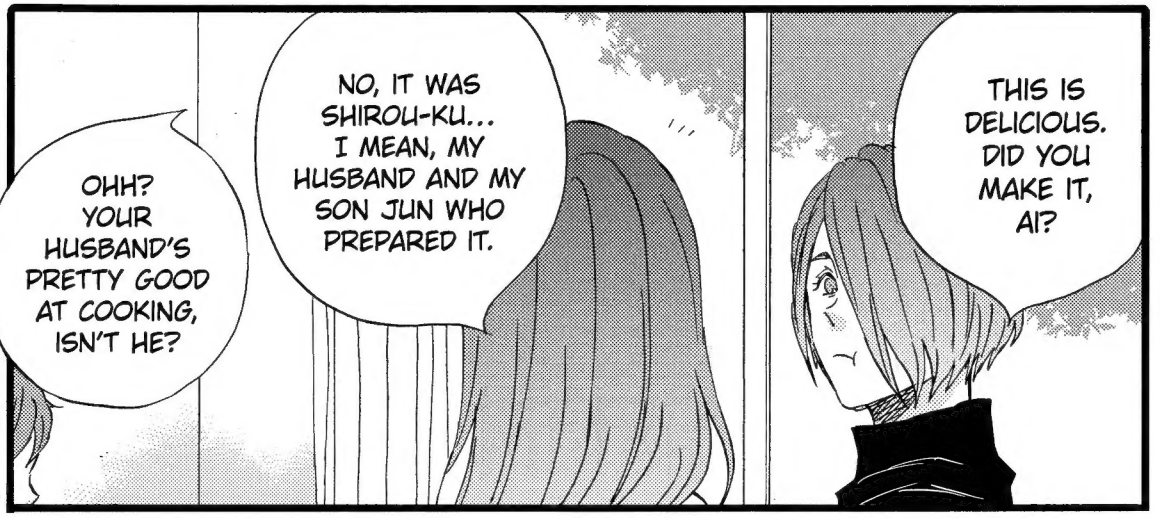
UM, THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO KNOW.
WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO ABOUT HER?
"OH, YEAH," SHE SAYS...
HRM... WE DIDN'T FINISH OUR TALK YESTERDAY.

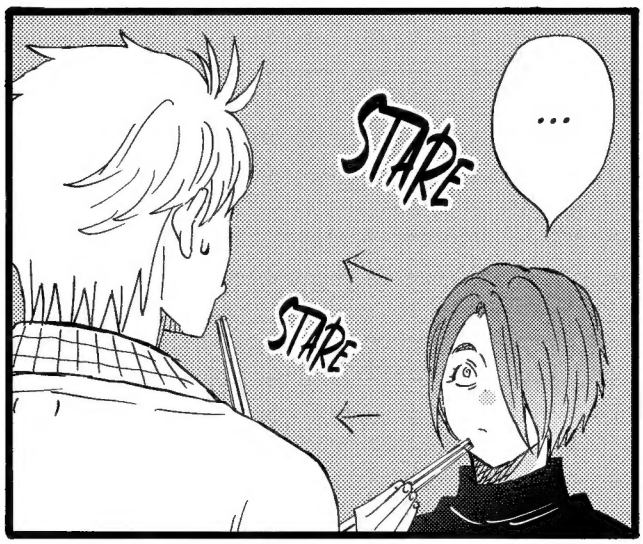

AWKWARD...
WHAT'S WITH THIS SCENE...!?

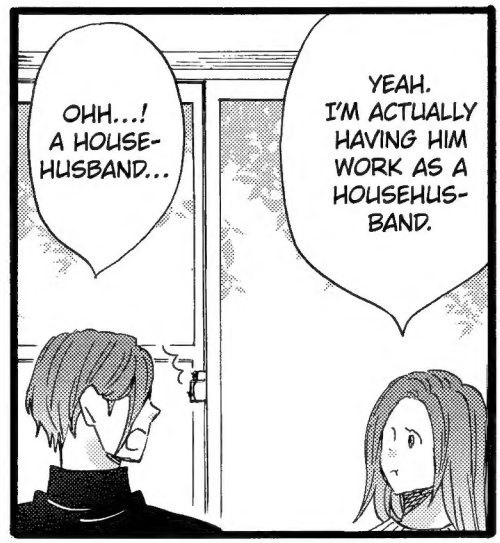

IT'S NEW YEAR'S DAY. LET'S HAVE HER JOIN US AT THE TABLE.
WHOA...


NO, HOLD ON. THIS PERSON IS ALSO FAMILY... ISN'T SHE?
MUNCH MUNCH

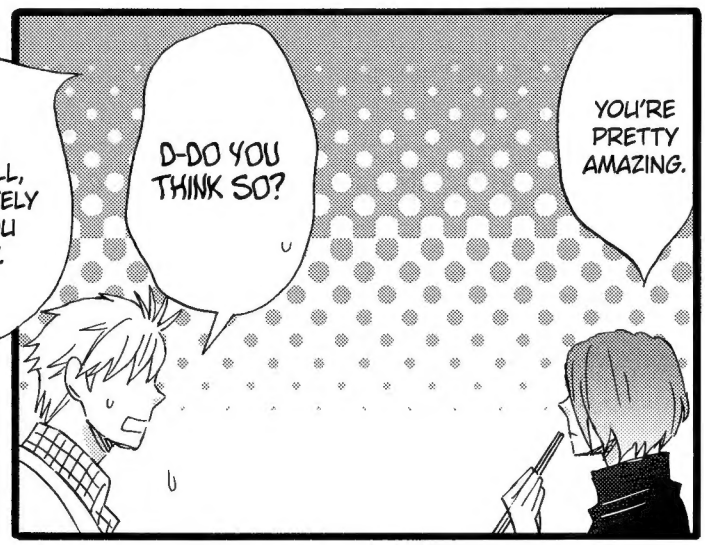

WHAT AN UNCOMFORTABLE NEW YEAR'S MORNING...
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE OUR FIRST NEW YEAR'S WITH JUN-KUN, AND YET...
THERE'S A STRANGER INTERFERING WITH OUR FAMILY TIME...

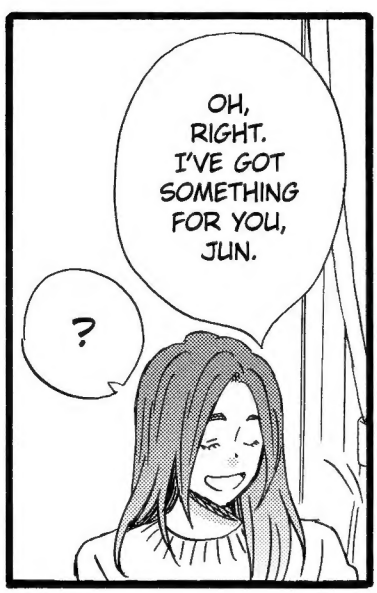

THIS IS DELICIOUS. DID YOU MAKE IT, AI?
NO, IT WAS SHIROU-KU... I MEAN, MY HUSBAND AND MY SON JUN WHO PREPARED IT.
OHH? YOUR HUSBAND'S PRETTY GOOD AT COOKING, ISN'T HE?

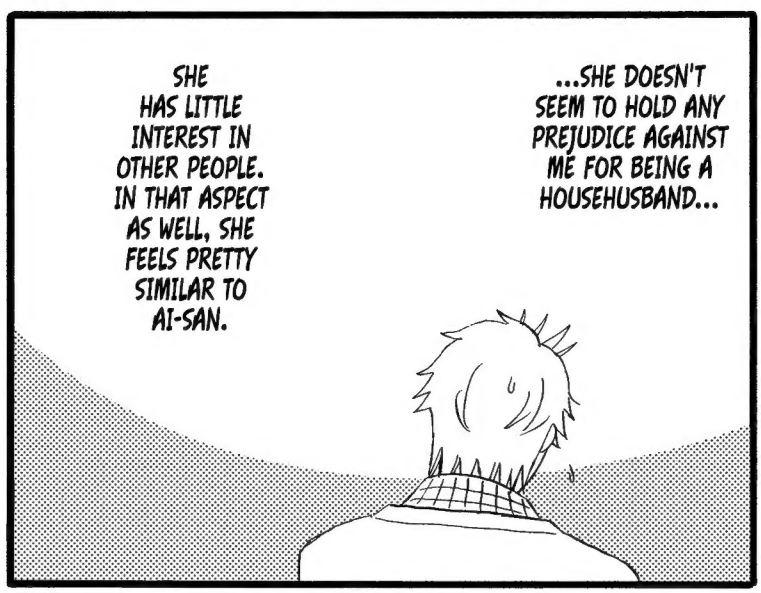

...
STARE
STARE


OHH...! A HOUSE-HUSBAND...
YEAH. I'M ACTUALLY HAVING HIM WORK AS A HOUSEHUS-BAND.

I CAN'T COOK AT ALL, SO I DEFINITELY ADMIRE YOU FOR THAT.


D-DO YOU THINK SO?
YOU'RE PRETTY AMAZING.


OH, RIGHT. I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU, JUN.
?


SHE HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN OTHER PEOPLE. IN THAT ASPECT AS WELL, SHE FEELS PRETTY SIMILAR TO AI-SAN.
...SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO HOLD ANY PREJUDICE AGAINST ME FOR BEING A HOUSEHUSBAND...

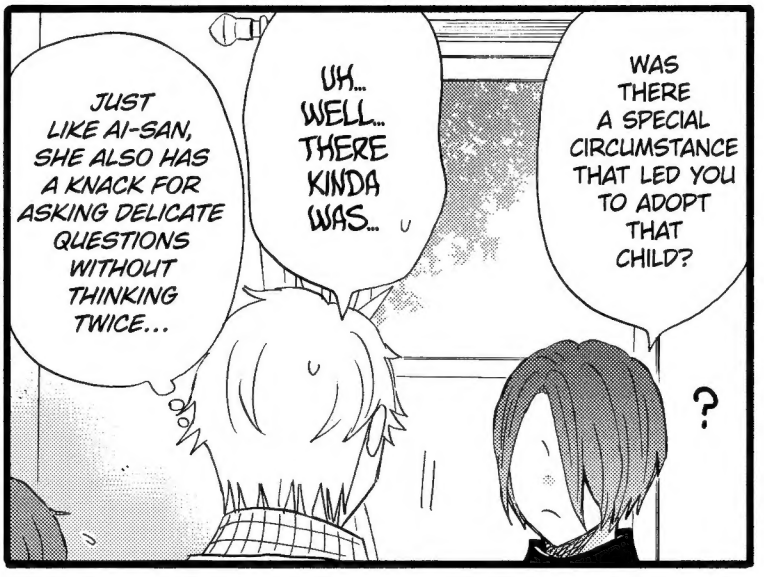
New Year's Money

HERE YOU GO. NEW YEAR'S MONEY.
OHH...!
FLIP

...
BUT I WASN'T EXPECTING TO GET THIS AT ALL...!

This one is from me.
IT'S NOT WORTH GETTING THAT EXCITED OVER IT.
SO THIS IS NEW YEAR'S MONEY...!

THEN LET ME GIVE YOU SOME NEW YEAR'S MONEY TOO...
Ha ha!
WHAT?!


JUST LIKE AI-SAN, SHE ALSO HAS A KNACK FOR ASKING DELICATE QUESTIONS WITHOUT THINKING TWICE...
UH... WELL... THERE KINDA WAS...
WAS THERE A SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE THAT LED YOU TO ADOPT THAT CHILD?
?

"IT'S WAY TOO LATE FOR YOU TO ACT LIKE A MOTHER!" ...WOULDN'T AI-SAN FEEL BOTHERED AND THINK SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES, TOO?

How much money does one usually give to kids?

WHAT... IS THIS ABOUT?

WELL, THEN...

NOPE. SHE DOESN'T MIND IT AT ALL...!

MAN, I'LL NEVER GET USED TO THIS FAMILY'S NONCHALANT ATTITUDE...

GOOD FOR YOU, JUN!

SMILE!

YOU SHOULD COME WITH US.

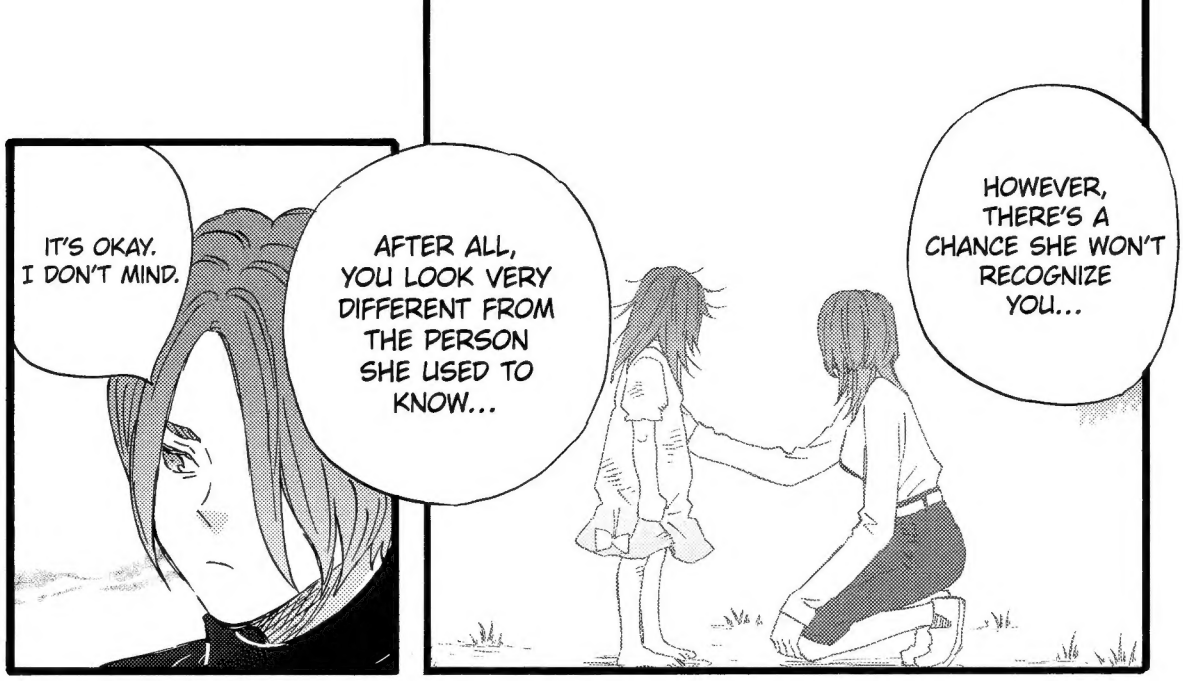
YOU WANT TO SEE HER, DON'T YOU?

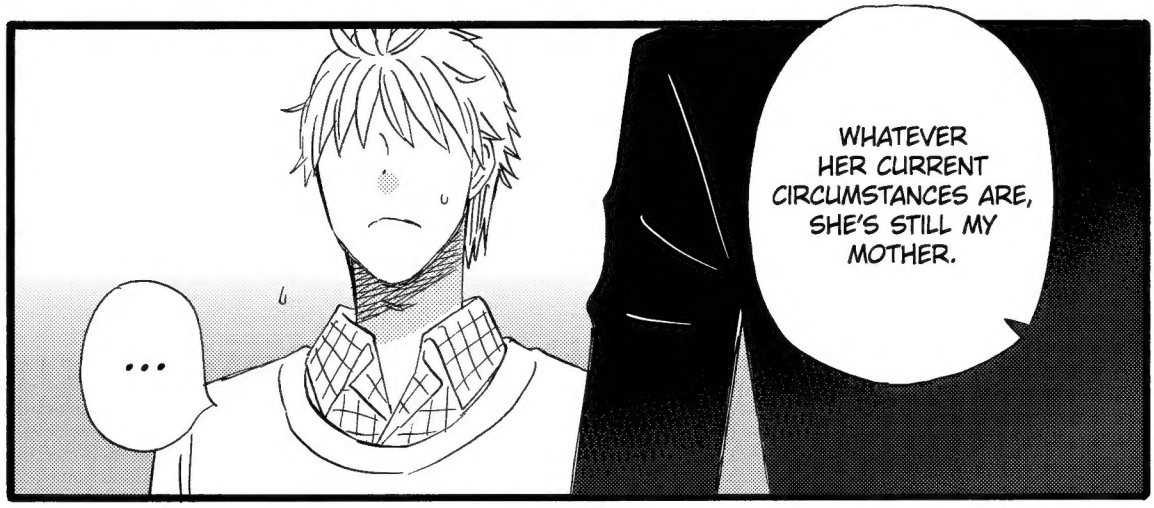
OHH... YOU'RE GOING TO VISIT MOTHER, RIGHT?

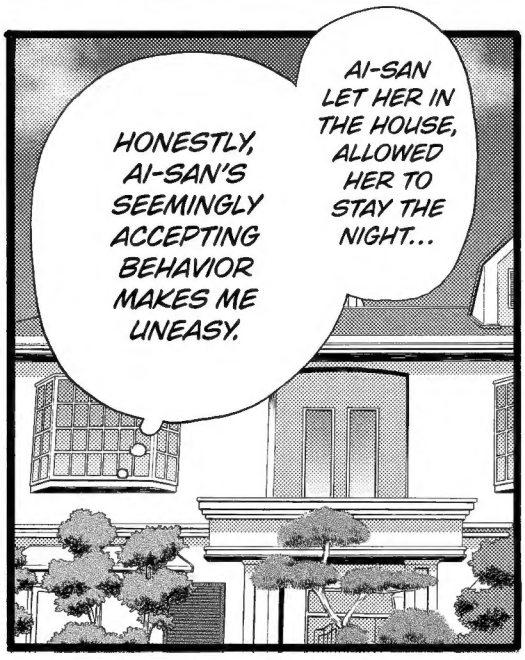
IT'S TIME WE GO TO THE HOSPITAL.

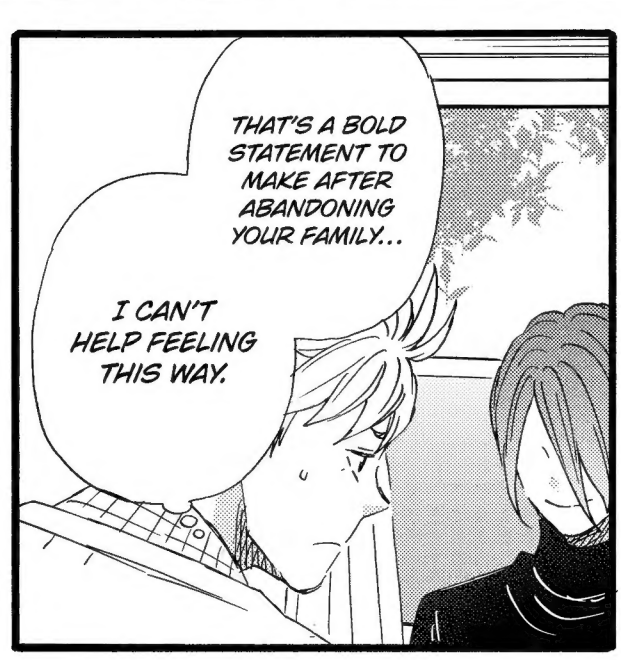
RIGHT.

Clatter

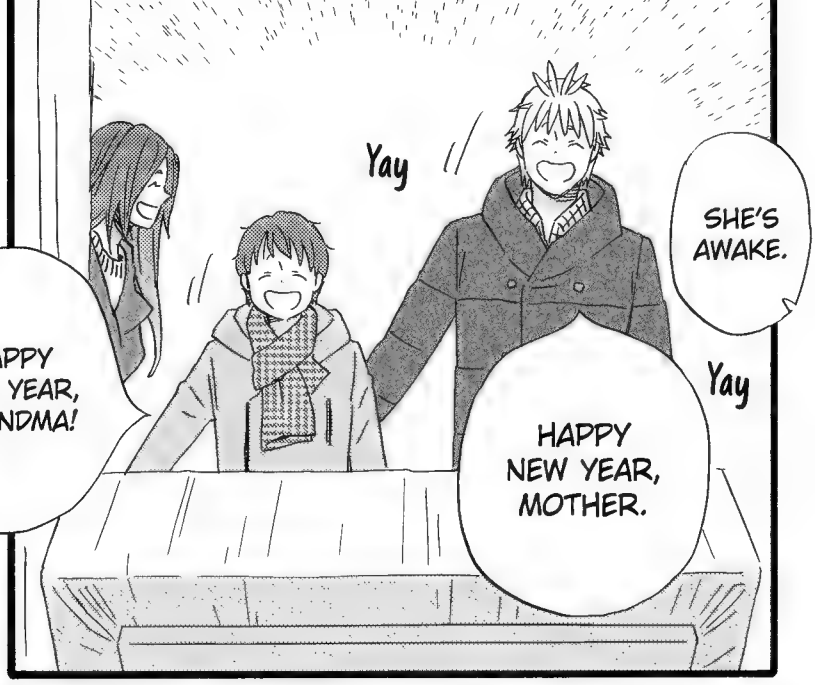

IT'S OKAY. I DON'T MIND.
AFTER ALL, YOU LOOK VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE PERSON SHE USED TO KNOW...
HOWEVER, THERE'S A CHANCE SHE WON'T RECOGNIZE YOU...

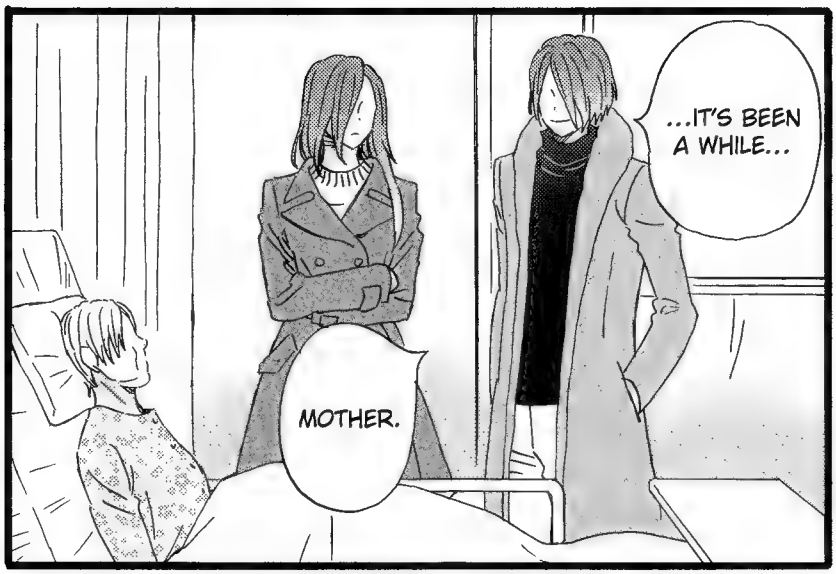

...
WHATEVER HER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE, SHE'S STILL MY MOTHER.

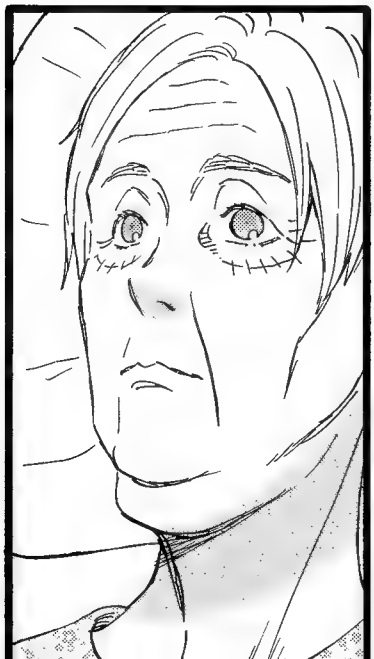

HONESTLY, AI-SAN'S SEEMINGLY ACCEPTING BEHAVIOR MAKES ME UNEASY.
AI-SAN LET HER IN THE HOUSE, ALLOWED HER TO STAY THE NIGHT...

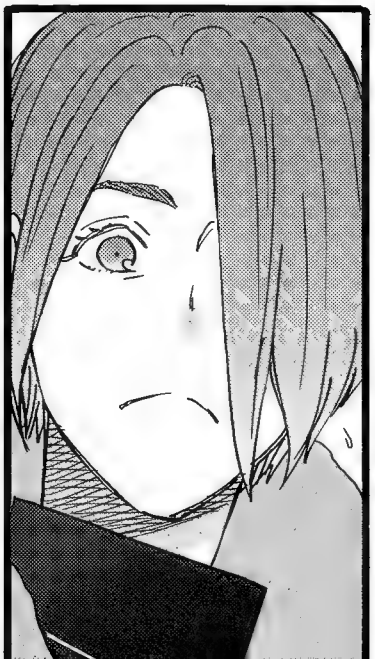

THAT'S A BOLD STATEMENT TO MAKE AFTER ABANDONING YOUR FAMILY...
I CAN'T HELP FEELING THIS WAY.

...


HAPPY NEW YEAR, GRANDMA!
Yay
SHE'S AWAKE.
Yay
HAPPY NEW YEAR, MOTHER.


MOTHER.
...IT'S BEEN A WHILE...

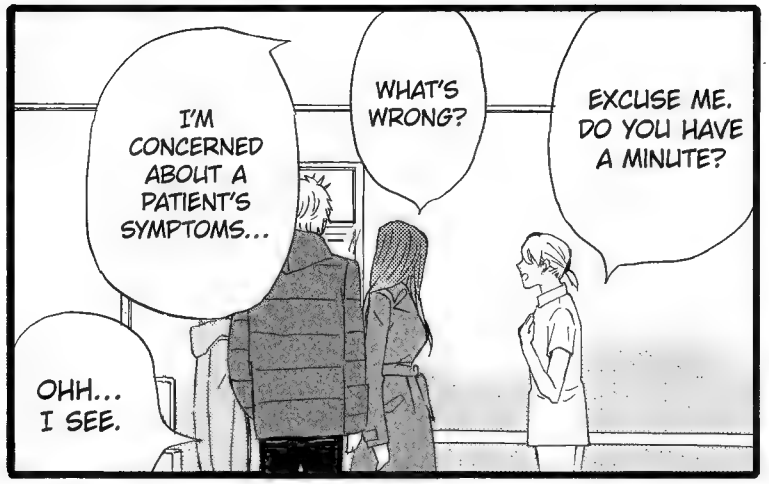


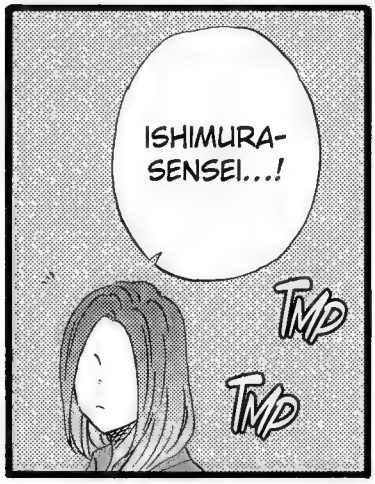


SHE PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THAT AI-SAN GOT MARRIED, OR ADOPTED A CHILD...
SINCE SHE'S UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE, IT'S UNCLEAR HOW WELL SHE COMPREHENDS THE CURRENT SITUATION...
MUMBLE
...
I'M SORRY...
CAN YOU PLEASE LEAVE ME ALONE WITH HER FOR A LITTLE BIT...?
305 ISHIN
BUT IN HER CASE... SHE SAID THAT SHE WAS LEAVING JAPAN.
I THINK IT'D BE GOOD IF THEY MET PROPERLY ONE LAST TIME.
...
IS THAT ALRIGHT WITH YOU, AI-SAN?
WE CAN SEE MOTHER ANYTIME.

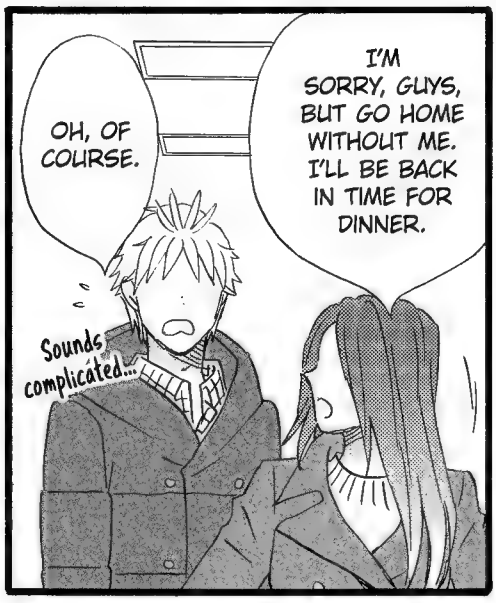
HONESTLY, THAT'S REALLY SELFISH. I DON'T THINK IT'S SOMETHING A PERSON WHO ABANDONED HER FAMILY HAS THE RIGHT TO SAY...
I MEAN, SHE EVEN ASKED AI-SAN TO LEAVE THEM ALONE...

MEETING THE CHILD SHE GAVE BIRTH TO, AI-SAN, WAS JUST AN INCONSEQUENTIAL EXTRA.
THAT'S RIGHT... THAT PERSON ONLY RETURNED HOME BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO SEE HER MOTHER...


EXCUSE ME. DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
WHAT'S WRONG?
I'M CONCERNED ABOUT A PATIENT'S SYMPTOMS...
OHH... I SEE.

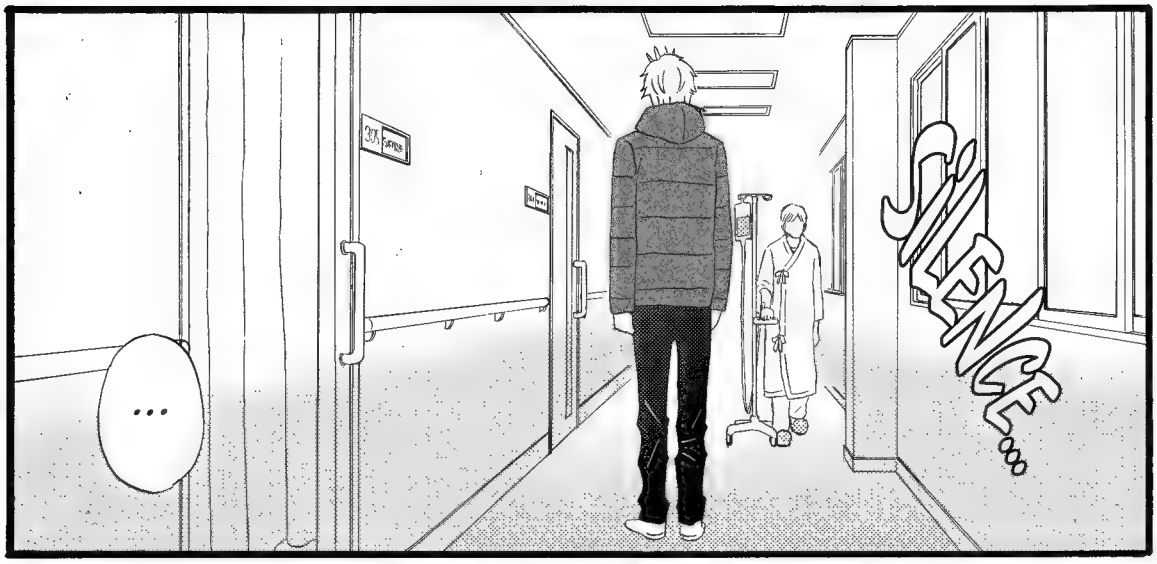

ISHIMURA-SENSEI...!
TMP
TMP

DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR TODAY, JUN-KUN?
UM... MY FRIENDS INVITED ME TO JOIN THEM FOR THE FIRST SHRINE VISIT OF THE YEAR.
OH, IS THAT SO?

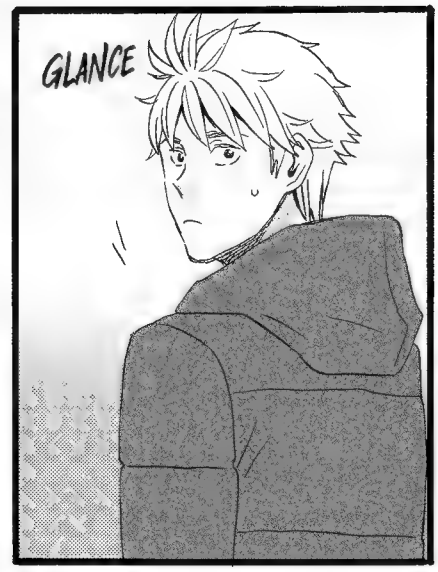

I'M SORRY, GUYS, BUT GO HOME WITHOUT ME. I'LL BE BACK IN TIME FOR DINNER.
OH, OF COURSE.
Sounds complicated...

Make sure you're home by dinnertime.
Okay!

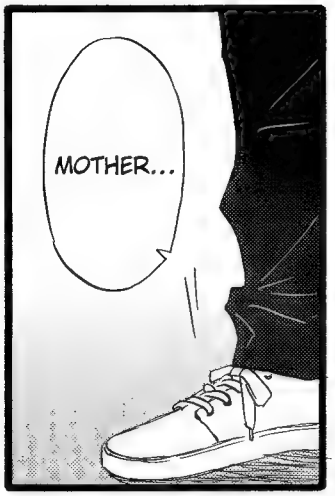
OTHER THAN WATCHING TV, I GUESS.
SOUNDS GOOD. YOU SHOULD GO.
REALLY? I'LL CALL THEM, THEN.
IT'S NEW YEAR'S DAY. THERE'S NOTHING SPECIAL TO DO AT HOME...

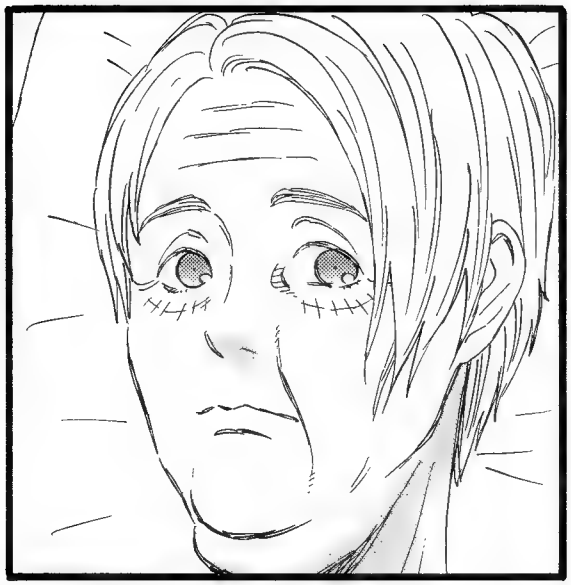

...
SILENCE...

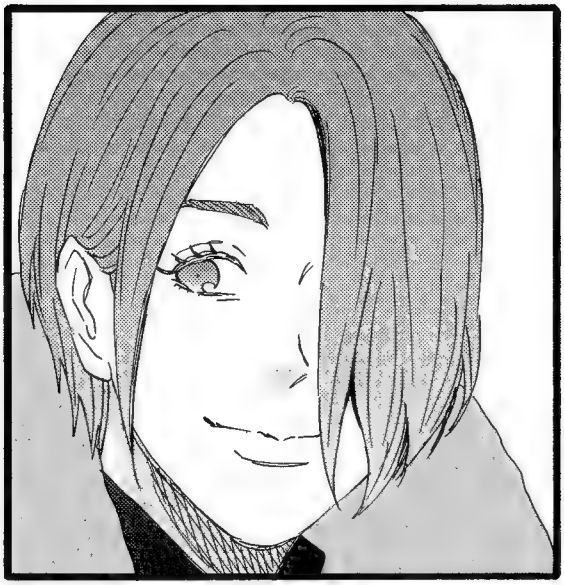
WHAT SHOULD I DO? SHOULD I LEAVE HER BE AND GO HOME?
MAYBE I SHOULD AT LEAST SAY GOODBYE BEFORE I LEAVE...?


GLANCE

YOU MAY NOT REMEMBER ME ANYMORE, BUT...
IT'S ME, MISAKI...


MOTHER...



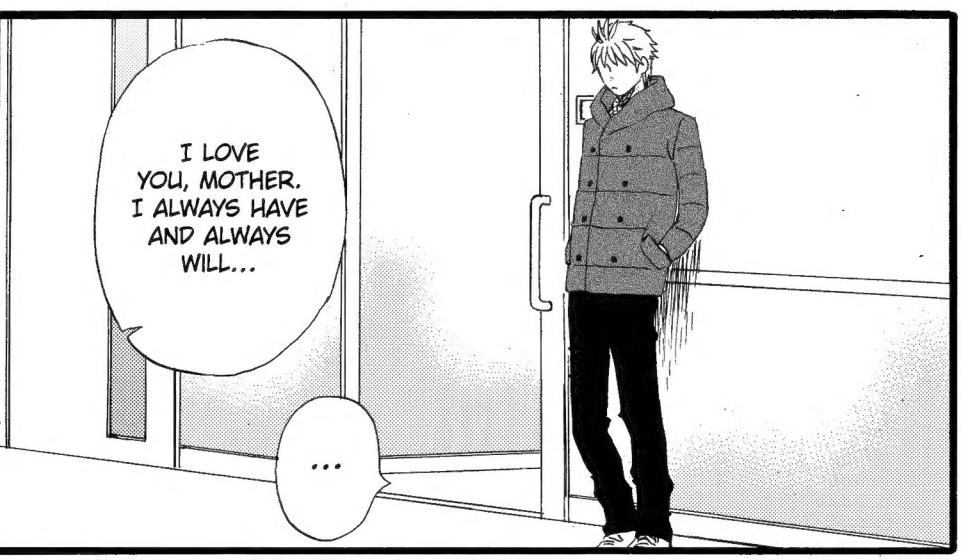


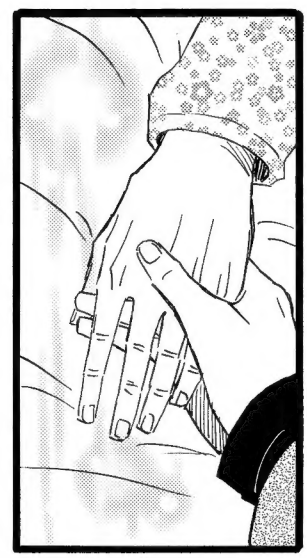
AS MY TRUE SELF.

THANKS TO YOU, I'M NOW LIVING...
THANK YOU, MOTHER.

SO I'M CERTAIN THIS IS THE LAST TIME I'LL SEE YOU...

I'M LEAVING THIS COUNTRY SOON.
AND I PROBABLY WON'T EVER COME BACK.

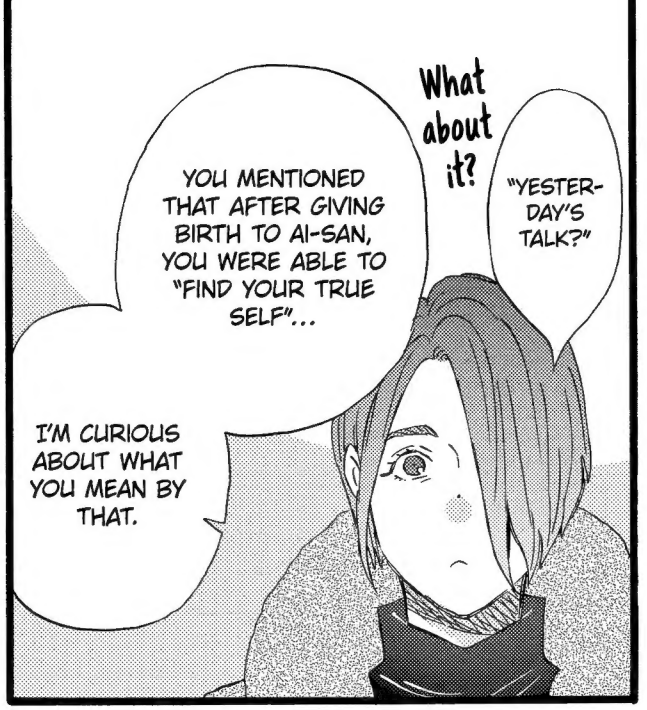

I LOVE YOU, MOTHER. I ALWAYS HAVE AND ALWAYS WILL...
...



IT'S FINE... I MEAN... WE STILL HAVEN'T FINISHED YESTERDAY'S TALK...
I ASSUME THERE'S MORE YOU WANT TO TELL AI-SAN.
PLEASE HAVE DINNER WITH US.

I'M SORRY YOU HAD TO WALK ME HOME.

AFTER ALL, I CAN'T THINK OF A LEGITIMATE REASON...
FOR SOMEONE TO ABANDON THEIR CHILD.
I BELIEVE IT'S SOMETHING YOU SIMPLY CAN'T DO.

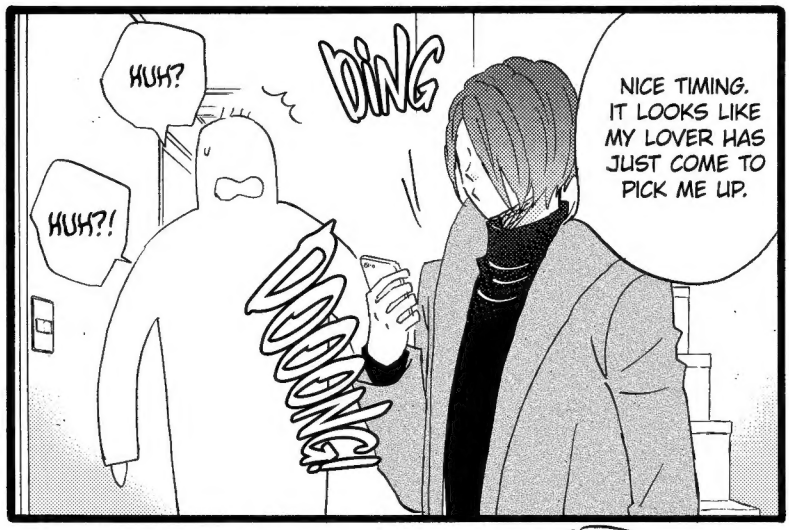

What about it?
"YESTERDAY'S TALK?"
YOU MENTIONED THAT AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO AI-SAN, YOU WERE ABLE TO "FIND YOUR TRUE SELF"...
I'M CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT YOU MEAN BY THAT.

...

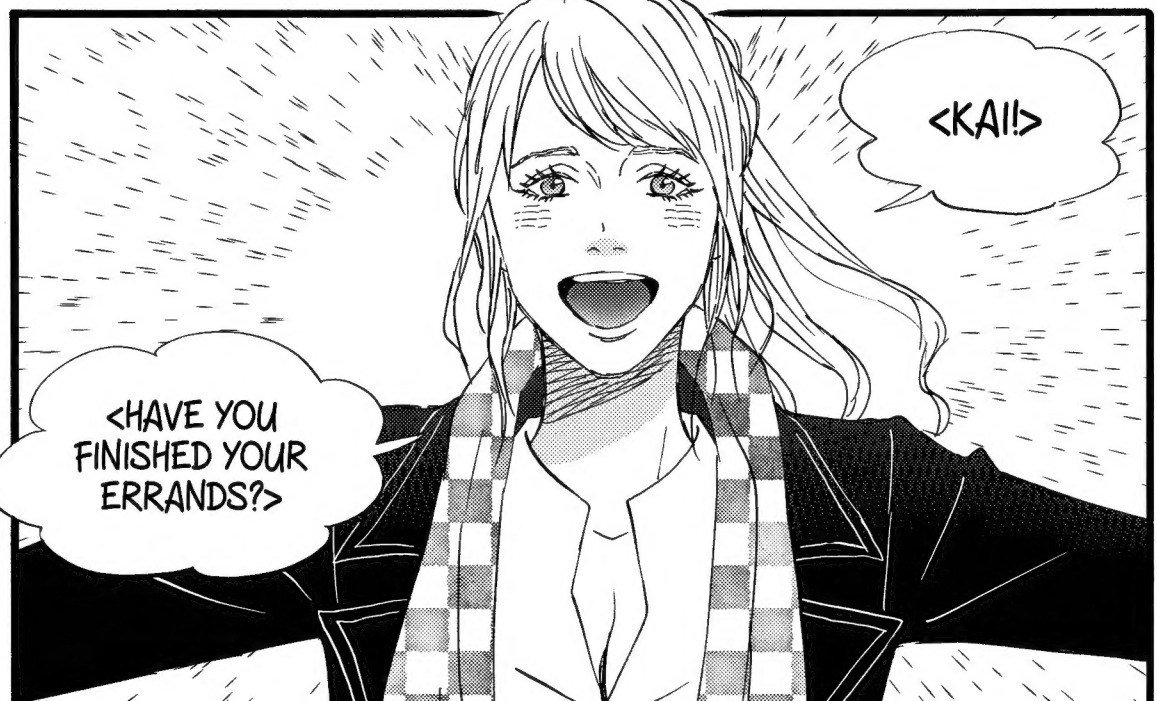
HOW COULD YOU SAY THAT IN FRONT OF HER? I CAN'T FORGIVE YOU.
ABANDONING AI-SAN TO RUN AWAY WITH A MAN, THEN CLAIMING YOU DON'T REGRET IT...

AND YET...
EVEN THOUGH SHE SEEMS SO COLD...
EVEN THOUGH SHE LOOKS SO SIMILAR TO AI-SAN, I FEEL LIKE THAT'S NOT ALL THERE IS TO IT...
IF THERE'S A REASON FOR HER ACTIONS, AND THAT REASON CAN HELP AI-SAN, WHOM SHE ABANDONED... THEN I'D LIKE TO KNOW.

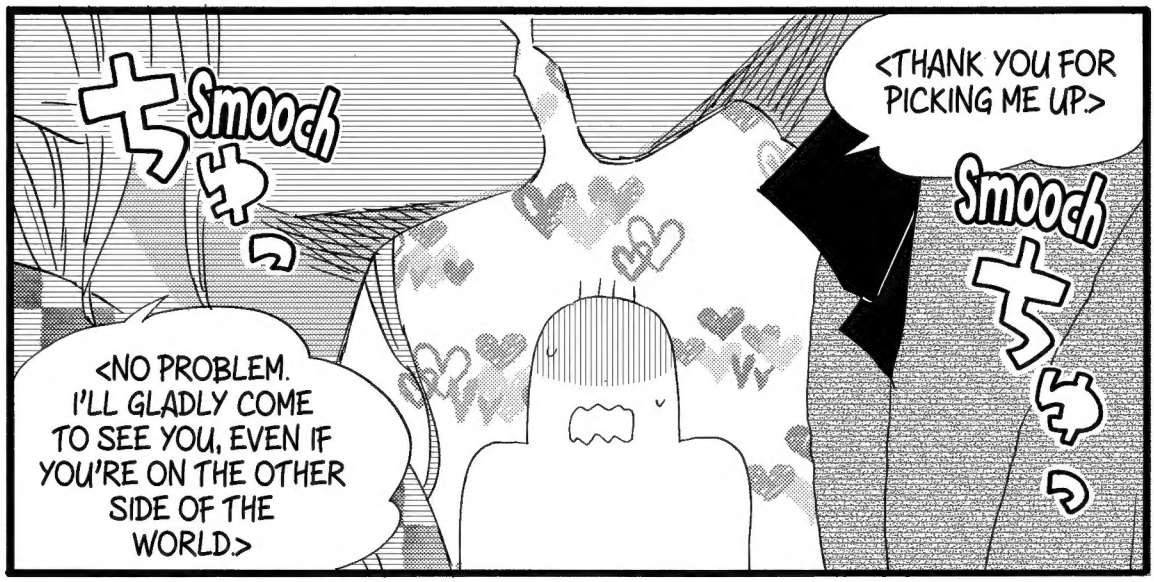
I SEE. WELL, AS HER HUSBAND, I SUPPOSE THAT'S A NATURAL REACTION.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. MY BUSINESS HERE IS FINISHED. I'LL LEAVE RIGHT AWAY.
WHAT ...?


NICE TIMING. IT LOOKS LIKE MY LOVER HAS JUST COME TO PICK ME UP.
DING
DONG
HUH?
HUH?!

OH?
RING
DING


<KAI!>
<HAVE YOU FINISHED YOUR ERRANDS?>

WHAT...?


<THANK YOU FOR PICKING ME UP.>
Smooch ちゅっ
Smooch ちゅっ
<NO PROBLEM. I'LL GLADLY COME TO SEE YOU, EVEN IF YOU'RE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD.>

...
WHAAAAAT?!!